

**OEM Website Audit Steering Committee
Conference Call Notes
November 18, 2004**

On November 18, 2004, the first meeting of the OEM Website Audit Steering Committee took place by conference call. Participants on the call included Holly Pugliese (US EPA), and Ron Turner, Dave Scaler, Bob Everett, Ron Garrett, John Daley, Neil Zipser (Paul Foley's proxy), Mark Warren, Charlie Gorman, John Cabaniss, Aaron Lowe, Bill Haas, and Dean Hermano (see the official Steering Committee roster for each member's affiliation). Also on the call were Bill Balcke, Twohy Murray, and Monika Chandra, from Perrin Quarles Associates, Inc., an EPA contractor providing logistical and other support to this audit project.

A. Introduction

The meeting began with the introduction of the Steering Committee members. Following introductions, the agenda of the conference call and a brief history of the OEM project were discussed. It was noted that fifty to sixty individuals requested membership on the Steering Committee, but EPA made the decision to limit the committee to thirteen members. Because of the strong interest in the OEM evaluation, EPA believes a project website will help to convey the committee's findings. EPA also suggested that information regarding the OEM project be posted on the IATN and NASTF websites. The suggestion was generally supported. Several committee members agreed that a website would be useful. It was also agreed that a short description of the project on the NASTF website would be beneficial.

B. Project Website

PQA suggested a series of items be included on the website including a list of committee members, an audit schedule, contact information, and survey results. The potential to use the website to register technicians for conducting the survey was also discussed. Recognizing the widespread interest in this project, it was agreed that the website should include as much information as possible. PQA noted that the website would be designed only for the OEM project, and the website would probably be discontinued once the final report was published. After discussing the matter, the group agreed on some specifics for the website, including the list of committee members, conference call and meeting notes, and phone and email addresses (each member consented to distribution of their contact information). Other details, such as inclusion of a registration form and a "smart" system for reviewing results, were left for future discussion. Committee members suggested PQA draft elements of the website for comment prior to further discussion and public release. PQA agreed and also noted that, in any event, the website likely would be created in phases.

The discussion of website design prompted a discussion of the audit process. One member expressed concern that manufacturers would not be credited with changes made during the audit evaluation. The member felt manufacturer improvements made in response to auditor comments should be incorporated into the website. Manufacturers should be allowed to show improvements and indicate when improvements were made. Another member questioned how OEM websites would be evaluated by technician auditors. Discussion of the audit process and audit evaluation was postponed until later in the conference call.

C. Project Schedule

PQA and EPA have already developed a preliminary schedule for the project, and this was conveyed to the committee members. One member questioned whether three months was enough for a technician audit. EPA responded that the OEM project is intended to be a pilot project, and also that the timeframe fits EPA's contract period. However, EPA stated that future projects might be more long term. Another committee member noted that the December 30, 2004 deadline for the Draft Audit Plan was ambitious due to upcoming holidays. Responding to the comment, one member stated that one month (January) was not necessary for the Steering Committee to review the Draft Audit, so the overall schedule probably still provides adequate time to finalize the Audit Plan.

Several members agreed that technicians should be identified as soon as possible so that the audit process could begin shortly after the Audit Plan is finalized. EPA stated that around twenty technicians had already volunteered. PQA added that passwords for OEM sites likely will be distributed to technicians in February 2005.

The committee is scheduled to meet weekly throughout December 2004. Several members wished to finalize the dates of future conference calls. December 2, December 9, and December 16 were selected. Conference calls will take place at 2:00 PM Eastern Standard time on these dates. Members unable to attend may send a proxy. One member questioned whether weekly meetings would continue into January. PQA replied that there were currently no meetings scheduled. However, monthly meetings beginning in January were proposed and are expected by EPA.

D. Scope and Limitations

Discussion then shifted to the scope and limitations of the audit process. It was unclear to most committee members what was required of OEM sites by EPA regulations. EPA agreed to send the OEM regulation to members of the Steering Committee. The regulation only mandates review of emission related issues. Members questioned how technicians would define emission related issues. EPA noted that ten issues were specifically identified in the regulation. PQA agreed to distribute the list of emission related issues to Steering Committee members.

E. Overall Method for Conducting the Audit

Most members felt that the committee would be overwhelmed by technician volunteers, and a selection process was necessary. One suggestion was that technicians be selected on a first come, first serve basis. However, several members agreed that the group of technicians evaluating sites should represent a mix of backgrounds and abilities. It was agreed that diversity would increase the legitimacy of the study. One member suggested three-fourths of the group work to develop the questionnaire while other members assign technicians to the various sites. However, the group agreed that three Steering Committee members (Bill Haas, Mark Warren, and Paul Foley volunteered) could develop some draft questions to ask potential auditors.

It was generally agreed that a maximum number of technicians should be encouraged to apply. EPA initially stated that it expects only 5 to 6 technicians for each of the 25 to 26 OEM sites. EPA stated that around twenty technicians had already volunteered. One member suggested that the number of audit technicians per site be raised to eight or ten. The member believed that only a portion of the selected technicians would actually submit an OEM review. EPA noted that the number of technicians should be limited to keep the process manageable, but committee members saw little difference between five and ten technicians accessing a website. EPA agreed, and the desired number of technicians per site was increased to eight to ten. The total number of technicians needed will depend on how many sites each technician evaluates. One member suggested a question be included in the survey asking technicians if they would be willing to evaluate multiple sites. The method for notifying potential technicians was not finalized. EPA stated that it did not intend to issue a press release.

PQA then asked how long technicians should have to evaluate the OEM sites. PQA proposed two weeks. One member agreed that two weeks was an adequate amount of time. In response, another member suggested a progressive survey process whereby technicians would fill out a series of surveys over a three month period. Several members agreed with the idea of interim deadlines.

PQA suggested several topics such as content, training information, search engines, equipment purchasing, navigation and costs that might be included in the audit evaluation. Each committee member was given the chance to suggest additional questions or topics for the audit. One member felt technicians should rate up-time versus down-time. The member also felt that OEM response to site errors (e.g., broken links) should be rated. Another member agreed and stated that the presence and effectiveness of a "contact us" feature should be noted in the audit evaluation. A third member believed technicians should have the opportunity to submit written comments in addition to the EPA generated survey. This member also felt that manufacturers should have a chance to respond to these evaluations. EPA noted that a response to comments would be included with the final report. Other usage and cost topics were proposed as well.

Several members declined to comment at this time and instead suggested email be used to circulate preliminary ideas. The members agreed that email should be circulated among all of the committee members. However, specific questions regarding the appropriateness of a topic in relation to EPA's regulations should be submitted to PQA and EPA. PQA will organize the major points of the email circulation and present these items at the next meeting on December 2, 2004.

F. Action Items

- (1) Conference calls will be held on December 2, December 9, and December 16, 2004 at 2:00 PM Eastern Standard time. If a Steering Committee member is unable to attend, a proxy may be sent.
- (2) PQA will develop an outline for the OEM project website. At a minimum, the website will include a list of steering committee members, conference call and meeting notes, and phone and email addresses. Steering Committee members will comment on the site before it is released to the public.
- (3) A survey will be used to select technicians. Bill Haas, Mark Warren, and Paul Foley will develop the questionnaire for technicians wishing to participate in the audit process.
- (4) Steering Committee members will circulate ideas for audit evaluation topics through email. PQA will summarize the topics, which will be discussed during the December 2, 2004 conference call.
- (5) EPA will send the regulations to each of the Steering Committee members. PQA will prepare and distribute a brief list that describes the ten key emission related elements which the regulations require to be included on OEM websites.